



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Gov. Blagojevich announces state inspection program ensures highest-quality breast cancer detection tests

Illinois first and only state in the nation to offer free cancer screenings and treatment to all uninsured women

Governor urges women to recognize National Mammography Day by scheduling a mammogram

SPRINGFIELD – In his continuing effort to ensure that women receive life-saving mammograms, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today called attention to a program through the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) that ensures women are receiving high-quality mammograms. Each year, IEMA thoroughly inspects mammography equipment to ensure every machine is operating properly and women are getting accurate results. The Governor is taking this opportunity once again to encourage every woman to get screened just a few weeks after he expanded the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP), making Illinois the first and only state in the nation to offer every uninsured woman access to cancer screenings and treatment.

“Mammography is an invaluable tool in detecting breast cancer, so it’s important that we do everything possible to ensure the quality, safety and reliability of mammography performed in Illinois,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “Early detection of breast cancer is critical for saving lives, which is why we continue our efforts to reach every woman in the state and let her know about a program that eliminates financial barriers and gives uninsured woman access to free screenings and treatment. I hope women across Illinois will take a moment today to observe National Mammography Day and schedule a mammogram.”

Gov. Blagojevich expanded the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP), effective October 1, 2007, making it possible for more than 260,000 women in Illinois to qualify for cancer screenings and treatment, regardless of income. Since the program began in 1995, almost 183,000 screenings have been performed under the program.

A mammogram is a special breast x-ray that can detect 90 percent of cancers, even before a lump can be felt. This high detection rate makes it an important tool, along with self-examinations and regular clinical examinations, in the early detection of breast cancer.

Illinois is one of only three states in the nation approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to certify mammography facilities under the Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA) States as Certifiers Program. Illinois began conducting MQSA mammography equipment inspections in 1995 through a contract with FDA, and became a certifying state in 1998. Besides Illinois, only Iowa and South Carolina are part of the MQSA State Certifying Agency Program. IEMA has 11 state inspectors who personally inspect each of the nearly 400 mammography units in the state every year. The FDA recently commended the state's mammography inspection program for its performance following an annual evaluation.

“As one of only three certifying states in the nation, we not only ensure that all mammography machines are thoroughly inspected every year, but we can also quickly address any problems that could affect the quality of a mammogram,” said Andrew Velasquez III, IEMA director. “I join with the Governor in encouraging women to take advantage of the expanded Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, and I want to assure them that we’re dedicated to ensuring they receive the best diagnostic mammogram possible.”

All mammography facilities certified by the state receive a certificate from IEMA that should be displayed in the facility. Velasquez urges women to check for this certificate to ensure their mammography facility is certified.

Under Illinois law, each mammography facility is required to provide patients with critical information about breast cancer detection and diagnosis. Over the past 10 years, IEMA has provided nearly 3.2 million copies of the informational brochure, *Breast Cancer, Your Right to Know*, to mammography facilities throughout the state for distribution to women receiving a mammogram. The brochure is available in both English and Spanish.

More information about IEMA's mammography program and copies of the *Breast Cancer, Your Right to Know* brochure are available on the IEMA Web site at www.iema.illinois.gov.

For more information on the IBCCP – log onto www.cancerscreenings.illinois.gov or call 1-888-522-1282.